

Synthesizing Information

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

synthesize: to combine individual ideas, influences, or materials to create a new product or idea

synthesizing information: drawing from a variety of research materials, combining new ideas with prior knowledge, and applying the information to some new work or creation

HERE'S HOW

Step 1: Determine the message in each source. Decide what is most memorable or important about each work you are using. Then look for details the writers use to support these main ideas.

Step 2: Paraphrase the main ideas. You will find the main ideas easier to work with after you have rephrased them in your own words. You should also paraphrase difficult concepts and wording in each selection to improve your understanding.

Step 3: Compare sources in light of author's purpose and audience. Determine whether each selection was written to explain, inform, express an opinion, persuade, tell a story, or express emotion. You may interpret information in different ways depending on its purpose and audience.

Step 4: Ask questions about your sources. The right questions will help you view your subject from different perspectives. Ask questions starting with *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, *how*, and even *what if*. For example:

- How do the sources differ?
- What approach has the author of each work taken?
- Whose perspective is, or is *not*, represented?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Why is the message important to the author? To me?
- When and where is the writing set? When and where was it created?

Step 5: Connect to other sources, or your own experiences. Look for ways that key ideas relate to other works on the same subject, or to your prior knowledge of the subject. Use your imagination to find connections that may not seem obvious at first. Ask yourself:

- How does the information confirm or refute other material?
- How does the information relate to my life or to world affairs?

Step 6: Synthesize. After reviewing your sources as a group, piece the information together to create something new—an essay, story, poem, research paper, map, poster or other work. Be sure to offer your own original insights about the topic.